

Iowa Congressman Bruce Braley, a Democrat from Waterloo, expects lawmakers to move quickly to take action to ensure the B-P covers the bill for the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Braley visited the region on the ground last week and also flew over the area and out to where the oil rig exploded and sank.

“The overwhelming sense that I had from this entire trip was, it's impossible to comprehend just how bad things are until you fly over and see the massive geographic area that they're trying to cope with this disaster,” Braley says. He says he also talked with people in Louisiana who were starting to get worried that resources were going to be diverted to Florida and Alabama, when their coastlines were in jeopardy.

Braley says congress needs to ensure there are enough resources to meet all the needs, and he says they have to be sure that B-P pays the bill. Braley says he anticipates moving ahead very soon to remove the cap on liability of 75-million dollars per incident because of the enormity of the spill.

Braley says he is also sending the president a letter asking for a study of the impact of the oil spill on barge traffic in the gulf.

He says the five counties he represents on the Mississippi River depend on the route to get shipments from around the world. Braley says there is at least one report of a barge having to have oil cleaned off before it could enter the Port of New Orleans. He says delays to clean the barges could impact grain prices. Braley says cost brought on by the delays in barge traffic would also be assessed to B-P.

Braley says B-P is responsible for all the environmental cleanup costs and economic costs up to the 75-million dollar limit that he talked about. He says clearly B-P would “be on the hook” for those costs under the statute. Braley says the oil spill has not stopped barge traffic from moving through the area, but it's not know how much impact it might have for delaying shipments due to the need to clean the barges.